

The Ability of Jesus Christ to save Sinners.

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE
CHAPEL OF NEWGATE,
On SUNDAY November 21st, 1790,

At the Request of the Friends of
FRANCIS FONTON,
(Who was executed on the Wednesday following,
in the Old Bailev, for Forgery :)
And published for the Benefit of his distressed Widow
and Family :

BY THE REVEREND
WILLIAM LOVE, M.A. K
CURATE of ST. SAVIOUR, SOUTHWARK.

A L S O,
AN A P P E N D I X,
CONTAINING SOME
MEMOIRS OF MR. FONTON.

The SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

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A
S E R M O N, &c.

HEBREWS vii. 25.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

THE first teachers of the gospel particularly aimed at pointing out the excellence of true religion, at promoting the happiness of mankind, and at displaying the glories of the great Redeemer. This is no where more discernible than in the writings of the apostle Paul, especially in the epistle which he addressed to the Hebrew converts. These persons had been members of the jewish church; and, even after their conversion to christianity, they

possessed a strong attachment to the ceremonial law. From that attachment St. Paul endeavoured to wean them, by arguments drawn from the nature of the christian dispensation, and from it's superior excellence and worth.

Long before christianity was introduced into the world, God had revealed his determination to set aside both the jewish priesthood and the law. St. Paul declares that it was necessary that they should be annulled, because of their imperfection. There is, saith he, * a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof: for the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. The whole of the mosaical œconomy was typical, and had reference to a nobler and more perfect dispensation. Even the priesthood, with all the glory which hung around it, was imperfect. The priestly office was executed by men who themselves, being sinners, and

* ver. 18, 19.

being

being laden with infirmities, and subject to death, stood in need of pardon. It was necessary therefore that another priest should be raised up: and, according to our apostle, that priest was Jesus Christ. The blessed Redeemer was superior to the house of Aaron, both in the spotless dignity of his person, and in the vigour and efficacy of his administration. They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue, by reason of death; but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.* He ever liveth to make intercession for sinful men. His person is glorious, and his sacrifice is complete, inasmuch as by one offering he hath obtained eternal redemption for his people. From these premises the apostle very naturally and justly concludes that Jesus Christ is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him. For he who possesses glory and immortality, and who is able to make, or rather who has made an adequate sacrifice for sin, must be equally able to accomplish the purpose for which

* ver. 23, 24.

that sacrifice was made, that is, the salvation of men.

In my text the sacred writer discourses on the doctrine of salvation. It is no mean salvation to which he refers. It is not a deliverance from only the mere common, or even the extraordinary calamities of human life. Were I commissioned to proclaim a free pardon to such of you as have by your crimes exposed yourselves to punishment : had I authority to break off your galling fetters, to set open the prison doors, and to restore you to liberty, how would your aching hearts leap within you for joy ! But I stand here as the messenger of God to proclaim to you a better, a nobler salvation, a salvation, in comparison with which, deliverance from earthly dungeons and gibbets is a mere trifle. I speak now of the eternal salvation of your souls from sin, and from the just indignation of the great and holy God.

When the Divine Being created our first parents, he made a covenant with them, which is called the covenant of works, and gave them a law to be the rule of their obedience-

obedience to him. That law was then imprinted on their hearts, and is now contained in the ten commandments. It requires of men the most pure and disinterested love to God, and a perpetual regard to his glory. And with respect to our fellow creatures, it not only forbids us to do them any injury; but absolutely commands us to be as active in promoting their happiness as in promoting our own. The whole law is summed up by our Saviour in these words: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. This obedience was to be unwearied and perpetual, and in that case would have obtained the reward of eternal life. The language of the covenant of works is, This do, and thou shalt live. But on the other hand that covenant denounces a sentence of awful condemnation against the guilty. It saith, †Curfed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in

* Mark xii. 30, 31.

† Gal. iii. 10.

the book of the law to do them. It makes no allowance for our defects; nor hath it made any provision for mercy to the disobedient. It's constant and uniform language is, Obey, and thou shalt live: Transgress, and thou shalt die. So that as soon as ever man became a transgressor, the door of salvation by the covenant of works was eternally shut against him, and all his legal hopes were effectually cut off.

It needs no arguments to prove that we are sinners. We need only look into our own breasts, and we shall find the melancholy truth written there in the most legible characters. We were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin.* Our thoughts are polluted, our affections are corrupt, our wills are perverse, our souls and bodies with all their powers, are totally depraved. It is true, we have not all proceeded to the same lengths of vice and immorality, to which some in this place have run. But the best of us have no cause in ourselves for boasting. We have not been exposed to the same temptations as they

* Psalm, li. 5.

have, and we have been kept by the restraining power and goodness of God, or else their fate would have been ours. We are all by nature estranged from God. The prophet's description of the heart of man is universally true. He says, *The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? As sinners, we are all under the sentence of condemnation before God. And however thoughtless men may be, yet, while they continue strangers to the hope of the gospel, they are every moment standing on the brink of endless ruin. The law pronounces every sinner accursed; and it is sovereign compassion alone which delays the execution of the sentence.

But the blessed Jesus hath undertaken to screen his disciples from the fiery bolts of vengeance. It is said in the scripture, †that he hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. He saw the human race perishing in sin, and he voluntarily bore their punishment in his own body ‡Upon the cross.

* Jer. xvii. 9.

† Gal. iii. 13.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

Yes ; he left the bright mansions of glory, and came into this miserable world, on purpose that he might suffer the dreadful curse of God for such guilty worms as we. He suffered that sinners might be saved : he bled and died that we might live for ever.

Another part of the christian salvation, and which is closely allied to what has now been mentioned, is a perfect acquittal from every charge of guilt. The salvation of sinners is not, as it is frequently supposed to be, the result of an arbitrary display of mere mercy. In the stupendous system of redemption, Mercy lays no restraint upon the operations of Supreme Justice ; but admits her claims, and fully satisfies every demand. Grace appears, not in pardoning and saving the sinner without any regard to the claims of justice, but in making provision for the full satisfaction of those claims. As the solemn penalties which we have incurred by our violation of the law of God are inflicted, not upon the person of the penitent sinner, but upon the person of the Redeemer, so also the obedience of Jesus Christ to that law is counted

counted for righteousness to every sincere believer. In this sense it is written in the scripture, *By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. The law bestows it's rewards, only on the express condition of perfect righteousness. But Jesus Christ hath wrought out for us an everlasting righteousness, in which if we are clothed, we shall stand in the court of heaven fully justified from every possible imputation of guilt. The whole society of true christians will in the day of trial appear to be A glorious church, †not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

But, that this salvation may be complete, the blessed Redeemer proposes likewise to deliver us from the dominion of sin. There is in every human breast a native propensity to what is evil. And it is evident to all who indulge any degree of serious reflection, that this propensity, unless restrained by the power of God, invariably leads men to those pursuits which are incompatible with the dictates both of sound reason and of true religion. Such indeed is its strength,

* Rom. v. 19.

† Eph. v. 27.

that while we continue unregenerate, it bears an absolute sway over our hearts and our conduct. But the apostle St. Paul saith to such as truly fear God, *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Freedom from sin is essentially necessary to our happiness. Were it possible that the sinner, whose heart has never been renewed by the Spirit of God, could enter into heaven, he would find there no pleasure. The pleasures of heaven are the pleasures of holiness, and consequently are not suited to the vitiated taste of an unregenerate man. The disciples of Christ therefore are gradually freed from the miserable service of sin. They are enabled by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit to hate it, and to forsake and renounce it, and are restored to that image or resemblance of the Divine Being which, to use the beautiful and expressive language of inspiration, consists †in knowledge, and righteousness, and true holiness. It cannot indeed be reasonably expected, that, during our continuance in this world,

* Rom. vi. 14. † Col. iii. 10, & Eph. iv. 24.

we should entirely shake off all our sinful habits, and become perfectly innocent and pure. I know that *There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not. Yet sin, though it exists, cannot reign in the heart of a good man. It may and will strive for the mastery, and in some unhappy moments of temptation it may awfully prevail: but grace will humble us on account of our sins, will make us pray earnestly for strength, and will at last bring us off more than conquerors.

It is worthy of notice, that the salvation of which I speak, is to endure for ever. The prophet saith, †Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation. And he whose faithfulness to his word is inviolable, hath declared that ‡he giveth to his sheep eternal life, that they shall never perish, and that no one shall pluck them out of his hand. Were any of you, whose crimes have exposed you to the vengeance of your country, to receive a free pardon, you might probably soon offend again, and again be soon brought here to

* Eccles. vii. 20. † Isa. xlv. 17. ‡ John x. 28.

suffer

suffer. But the merciful Saviour takes the poor penitent sinner to heaven, and places him in a situation, where he shall never sin, and where he shall never more come into condemnation.

This salvation is provided for all who come unto God by Jesus Christ. It is impossible that we should be restored to complete happiness, till we apply to him from whom all true happiness is derived. While we continue to wander from God, we continue to be wretched. Not one of all the worldly pleasures which we have pursued, not one of all the sins which we have ever committed, can yield us the smallest degree of solid peace. Yea, I appeal to yourselves, whether sin hath not at times filled you with dismay. Let your own feelings then teach you that none but God can fill the soul with true peace. We are exhorted and encouraged by the sacred writers to draw near to the mercy seat, with all humility of mind. Pardon and salvation are indeed offered by the Father of mercies, and promised to sinners; but not indiscriminately to all sinners. They are promised to such
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only as truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the holy gospel. Jesus Christ came into the world to call sinful men, not only to the enjoyment of pardon, but also to the exercise of true repentance, and faith, and holy obedience. In order that the prodigal son might receive the blessing of paternal forgiveness, it was necessary that he should forsake his destructive courses, and return to his father. So the design of God in the gift of his son is, not to save us in our sins; but to save us from * them.

But it is necessary to observe, that they who come unto God, must come by Jesus Christ, as otherwise they cannot have any warrantable hope of salvation. We are instructed to believe that † There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; and that without his mediation we cannot be restored to the divine favour. In my text also, the ability of the Son of God to save sinners, is limited to such as come unto God by him. The meaning of this expression is, that all who are redeemed and saved, do absolutely and

* Matt. i. 21. † 1 Tim. ii. 5.

entirely

entirely depend upon the obedience and death of the blessed Saviour, for their acceptance with God. If we lay our repentance, or prayers, or tears, or any thing else which we can do, as the foundation of our hope, we reject the atonement of Christ. And, if we reject his atonement, There remaineth, saith the scripture, *no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. As long as we strive in our own strength to produce in ourselves the habits of repentance and godliness, we shall strive in vain. It is therefore our business to come to the footstool of sovereign mercy as poor guilty helpless sinners, looking for pardon through the blood of Jesus, and relying upon the almighty power of Christ, to produce in us true repentance, and love, and hope, and all those gracious habits which are requisite to our entering into the kingdom of God.

To all them who thus humbly and truly come unto God by him, the glorious Re-

* Heb. x. 26, 27.

deemer hath ability to extend his salvation, even to the uttermost. There is no rank nor condition in life, no age nor sex, nor country, nor kindred, which he is not able to redeem. This part of my subject deserves and demands some degree of illustration.

There is nothing in the external condition or rank of the true penitent, which can possibly hinder his salvation. If we form a just estimate of the various spheres of life in which our fellow creatures move, we must be convinced that in every different situation, there is something which opposes itself to our welfare. Concerning the more elevated walks of human life, our blessed Saviour hath said, *that it is more easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. But the inferior conditions of life also have their respective temptations. Place the righteous man in what condition you will, yet there is a sense in which it may be said concerning him, in the language of St. Peter,† that

* Matt. xix. 24.

† 1 Pet. iv. 18.

he is scarcely saved; or in other words, that it is through much spiritual opposition and difficulty that he is led to the kingdom of glory. The difficulties of the christian life however, give us more exalted ideas of the ability of the great Redeemer, and serve to convince us that he is full of grace and truth. He is able to counteract all the snares and the deceitfulness of wealth; and also to guard his servants against all the temptations which are attendant on poverty and distress. As a proof of this, it is recorded that powerful monarchs have gloried in their dependance upon him; and we have read that he numbered amongst his favourites the man, who while on earth, would have been glad to obtain the very crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. The poverty therefore, nay, even the infamy under which some of you labour, ought not to prevent nor discourage your applications to God for the salvation of your precious souls.

It may likewise with propriety be said, that the greatness of your sins cannot prevent the operations of divine mercy. But let
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me not be misunderstood. I do not mean that a man may, or ought to assure himself of an interest in the mercy of God, while he continues to walk in the ways of sin. Whatever hope such persons may profess to have, they do but deceive their own souls. He who is brought to true evangelical repentance, sees his depravity and vileness, and stands self convicted, and self condemned. Thus situated, he looks upon himself as the very chief of sinners. He wishes indeed to approach the mercy seat, but in the first moments of conviction he trembles lest his sins should prove too great to be forgiven. To the sinner who is in such a condition of painful suspense, the God of mercy hath said, *Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Notwithstanding our sins may be great, and more in number than the hairs on our heads, or even than the stars of heaven; yet, †where sin hath

* Isa. i. 18.

† Rom. v. 20.

abounded, grace hath much more abounded.

Neither are the various aggravations of sin any bar to the mercy of the Son of God. We will suppose the sinner to have shaken off the restraint of a pious education. We will imagine him to have violated the dictates of his conscience, and wilfully to have shut his eyes against the light of divine truth. Further, we will suppose him to have enjoyed the benefit of the christian ministry, and to have hardened himself against every impression which that ministry is calculated to make upon the human heart. Nay, we will even suppose him to have proceeded so far in a course of wickedness, as to have brought himself in this world to condign punishment. When these circumstances of aggravation attend the commission of sin, they make it awful indeed! Yet the sinner, if he really feels his misery and want, need not despair. When the Divine Being reminded the Jews of their complicated crimes, crimes which were aggravated beyond measure, and when one might have expected an immediate denunciation

nunciation of vengeance, O unbounded compassion! he said, *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Such declarations of supreme mercy, while they encourage genuine repentance, cannot fail to destroy every desponding fear which rises in the christian breast.

To these reflections I will add, that there is nothing in the justice and purity of God to prevent the salvation of the penitent sinner. Amongst men, an act of mercy to offenders against the laws would, in many cases, be an act of cruelty to the world at large. But in the divine government the case is widely different. It is true that the glorious Jehovah is of † purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and it is equally true, that, according to the maxims of impartial justice, it becomes the Sovereign of the universe actually to inflict the punishment which is due to every transgression. Yet we are informed by the pious psalmist, that in the œconomy of man's redemption, ‡ mercy and truth are

* Isa. xliii. 25. † Hab. i. 13. ‡ Psalm, lxxxv. 10.

met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other. The everlasting salvation of sinners is entirely compatible with that law, which is the most lively picture of divine purity and justice. The law is even magnified *and made honourable, by the substitution of the adorable Redeemer in the place of guilty men. He hath completely atoned for their offences, which they never could have done; and hath in their behalf rendered such an obedience to the law of God as gives them an unquestionable title to all the felicities of the heavenly state. It is written, †that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, not merely merciful, but faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Holiness and justice now concur with sovereign mercy in the redemption of sinners. The blessed Saviour can be just, and yet the justifier of all, however unworthy they may be in themselves, who commit their cause to his hands.

* Isa. 42, 21.

† 1 John, 1, 9.

Finally,

Finally, if there be any other difficulties or temptations which excite our fears, they shall not prevail: for the great Captain of our salvation will fight for us and with us, till our warfare shall be ended, and our victory and our joy shall be complete. While we continue in this sinful world, we find, by experience, that many snares are spread for our feet, that the fiery darts of Satan are frequently levelled at us, and that many things hinder us in our progress towards the kingdom of glory. But he who hath said, *My grace is sufficient for thee, is also able to make his declarations of mercy good. If we are brought to the true knowledge of Christ, we may confidently say, Stronger is he that is for us than all they who can be against us. He can defeat the malice of the Prince of darkness, and can make his own strength perfect in our weakness. In a word, he can keep us by his mighty power, through faith, unto salvation.

Perhaps some poor wretch in this congregation may be ready with a throbbing

* Cor. 12, 9.

heart to say, Is there any hope? Can there be any mercy for me? Yes, my fellow sinner, if your heart be properly humbled and broken on account of sin, and if you are earnestly longing for pardon and deliverance, there is mercy in store even for you. The compassionate Jesus pitied and saved the poor penitent thief, when expiring on the cross. And his arm is not shortened, that it cannot save,* nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. He is able to save to the very uttermost. He ever liveth to make intercession for the wretched and guilty. The seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel will shew you at large for what and for whom he intercedes in heaven. He pleads before the throne of God, that his blessed word may become instrumental in bringing fallen sinners into a state of the most intimate union with God. Happy, thrice happy is that soul for whom Christ prays! And he prays for all who come unto God by him. Let us then, if we feel our need of him to save us from endless ruin, take encouragement to make

* Isa. 59, 1.

him the object of our trust. He hath opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness; and he saith to the vilest of sinners, Wash, and be clean. Ye who are laden with guilt, let not your sinfulness and unworthiness keep you back. Fall prostrate before his footstool, and say, Save Lord, or we perish! If thou wilt, thou canst make us clean. If such language as this ascend from the heart, we shall soon know by happy experience, that he can save us from sin, and exalt us to glory.

I cannot however persuade myself that this discourse will have its proper weight with you all. I fear lest some of you should be found to despise that glorious salvation, which I have now preached. Perhaps, miserable as you are, you think that a close attention to religion is not needful, till the very last moments of life. But probably, filled with confusion and dismay, you may not then have it in your power to offer up from the heart so much as one petition for mercy. Consider I beseech you, that if you live and die without coming to God, and without the possession of true humi-
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liation, and repentance, and faith, Jesus Christ himself will not be able to save you. It will then in the very nature of things, be impossible for you to enter into the kingdom of heaven. O then, reflect upon your need of the Almighty Saviour! Seek him while he may be found: and call upon him while he is near. But if after all that can be said, you be still indisposed to attend to the voice of sovereign mercy, remember that he who is able to save, is also able to destroy. If we now turn a deaf ear to the word of salvation, in vain shall we hereafter sue for admission to the joys of the blessed: for the Saviour himself will be clothed in frowns and in terror, and will say to the wicked, Depart from me ye cursed, for I know you not.

But what shall I more particularly say to you, whom the laws have, on account of your crimes, doomed to an ignominious death? Was it not with fear and trembling that you lately passed through the solemn process of trial and conviction? Suffer me to remind you that shortly, very shortly, your dispositions and your conduct must

must undergo a feverer scrutiny, a more solemn investigation. Within three days you must appear before the awful Judge of quick and dead. Should you at his bar be convicted, how truly dreadful will be your eternal portion ! Two * of you have known more of the scriptures, and have made a stricter profession of religion than many. By your crimes you have exposed to contempt that gospel, which is the only sure foundation of a sinners hope. You have brought that reproach upon religion, which a long life of contrition and penitence would not be able to blot out. You have as it were crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. O, whither will you fly for refuge ? Ye trembling dying sinners, burthened with guilt, and sunk to wretchedness and scorn, Jesus intercedes for such as you. His heart is full of compassion. He says, Father, forgive them. O that you may experimentally find that this Jesus is your Saviour, your Friend ; and that he will be your portion for ever !

Ye who are occasionally present here this Day, permit me to tell you that the
same

* Mr. Fonton and Mr. Tyler.

same Jesus whom I preach to convicted criminals must, if ever you would be truly happy, be the only source of your hopes. There are crimes which no human laws can reach, and of which we all are naturally guilty. In a short time we must every one of us appear before God. If you know not the salvation of Christ, may God grant you now to feel it's power in your hearts! If you know the grace of God in truth, bless God for it, and say, Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy Name be the Glory. Improve your interest at the throne of grace in behalf of these poor sufferers. Their time is short, but not too short for God to do great things in their favour. May God help them to pray for themselves. May he help us all to pray for them! May he reveal his love to their souls, and cause the weighty sufferings which they endure on earth, to work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in heaven!



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A P P E N D I X,
C O N T A I N I N G
S O M E M E M O I R S
O F
M R. F R A N C I S F O N T O N.

1790.

IT is not the desire of this organization to



T H E
A P P E N D I X.

IT is not the design of this appendix to extenuate the crimes of the late unhappy Mr. Fonton. His offences were such as every good man must reprobate, and such as every good government cannot but mark with exemplary punishment. But as the public have been imposed upon by fallacious accounts of his feelings and his conduct, it is judged expedient to undeceive them.

Francis Fonton, the subject of these memoirs, was the son of Mr. Henry Fonton, a native of Nismes in France, who being a protestant, sought in England, in the early part of his life, an asylum from the terrors of papal persecution. Mr. Henry Fonton held for many years a comfortable appointment in the Assurance Office in Birchin-Lane, London. In that office he
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was well respected; and when, through age and infirmity, he became incapable of performing the duties of his station, he was allowed a decent annuity. His son Francis received his education at a day-school somewhere in Spital-fields, and at the usual age was placed out as an apprentice with a chaser, in the neighbourhood of Long-Acre.

Being now removed from under the eye of his parents, he soon began to discover a thoughtless contempt of sacred things. But in the year 1750, going one Thursday evening into Long-Acre chapel, he was forcibly struck with that sentence in the beginning of the Liturgy, If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. This happened to be the text from which the minister preached. The service being ended, he went home thoughtful and concerned about his everlasting state. And, with the permission of his master, he afterwards regularly attended the worship of God in that chapel.

When the time of his apprenticeship was expired, he went to live with his parents

rents, whose residence was then in Moorfields. Being inclined to the dissenting mode of religious worship, he frequently attended the ministry of the late Rev. Mr. Hitchin, in White's Row, Spital-fields, and other respectable nonconformist ministers. After some time he joined himself to the congregation which then met in Cannon-street, but which has of late Years met in Barbican. In this society he was appointed a deacon, i. e. an officer whose business is in many respects similar to that of a church-warden; and though he had a mean opinion of his abilities, yet he acquitted himself in that office in such a manner as gave general satisfaction. His connection with this congregation lasted more than twenty years: but when they came to the knowledge of his offences, he was excluded.

Differences in the mode of worship will prevail, and peculiarities of sentiment and of expression will attach themselves not only to parties, but to individuals: but the essence of christianity is precisely the same amongst good men of every denomination.

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The general strain of the preaching of those ministers whom Mr. F. was accustomed to hear, is too well known in the religious world to need any comment. Their doctrines are not the doctrines of licentiousness, but of piety to God, and justice and benevolence to men. His crimes therefore cannot be reasonably attributed to the influence of their preaching. To this truth he bore his dying testimony. He said that it was not the religion which he professed, but the want of it's real influence, which was the more remote occasion of his fall.

Mr. F. followed his business with diligence and cheerfulness for some years. But the changes which took place in the public taste and fashion having rendered it unprofitable, he quitted it, and obtained an appointment in the Bank of England. This was about the year 1772. His abilities, though not of the first magnitude, were suited to his station. And his punctuality and good conduct acquired for him general confidence and esteem. He had now attained the zenith of his life. In his circumstances he was easy; in his family he
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was truly happy ; in company he was pleasant ; and though not forward in conversing on religious subjects, yet in the circle of his more serious acquaintance he was much beloved. But circumstances of ease and pleasure are not always the most favourable to the growth of real piety. It was in these circumstances that Mr. F. began to grow formal in his religious profession, and careless about the enjoyment of the true spirit and power of godliness in the heart. Trifling as this may appear to some, it was the first inlet to all his crimes and his sufferings. The Apostle's caution, Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, will strike every serious mind on this occasion, as being founded in a thorough knowledge of human nature.

It had been a customary thing with Mr. F's friends, at different times, to leave sums of money in his hands, that he might purchase stock for them. And he had often transacted this kind of business with the strictest integrity. In the year 1786, he received a considerable sum to purchase stock in the three per cents. against a fixed
E 2 time,

time, which was then at some little distance. Knowing that this money would not be immediately wanted, and having had some heavy losses, he determined to employ it so as, if possible, to retrieve those losses. The lottery presented itself as a promising object of attention. He laid out a large sum in the purchase of tickets, and lost it. How to extricate himself he could not tell. He was afraid to inform his friends of his situation, lest it should come to the ears of the directors of the bank, and so be the means of depriving him of his office. He therefore ventured upon a second offence. He still entertained hopes of gaining by the lottery, but they proved abortive. Not being able to purchase the stock which his friends had commissioned him to buy, he persuaded them to let their cash lie in his hands, assuring them that by attending to the fluctuations of the market, he could make it more productive to them than it otherwise would be. Their consent was easily obtained; but it involved him in fresh difficulties. He now had, in order to prevent any enquiries from these persons concerning
their

their property, to pay them a very exorbitant interest. In this manner he was led on from step to step, till he had committed frauds and forgeries to the amount of near £8000. And between his attention to the lottery, and the payment of large sums for interest, he sunk the whole amount, without making any provision whatever for his family. His object indeed was not to accumulate property, but to extricate himself from a labyrinth of difficulties. In all these fraudulent and criminal transactions he was without an accomplice. He declared to his very latest moments that not an individual upon earth but himself, had been privy to any of his crimes. One would scarcely imagine that a man whose mind was not naturally formed for scheming, could have proceeded in such a course, for so long a time, without detection, as he did. But the great enemy of mankind readily leads men into his snares, till he thinks their recovery impossible, and then leaves them to deplore their melancholy fate in bitterness and tears.

During the whole of this period, Mr. F.
abated

abated nothing of his attendance upon the worship of God. The office which he held in the congregation in some measure obliged him to punctuality in the discharge of religious duties. But his mind was in a deplorable state. He regularly attended the celebration of the Lord's supper: but, conscious to himself that his conduct was inconsistent with the spirit of christianity, he partook of the bread and wine in appearance only. He found the ways of sin thorny and rugged. He had many an inward conflict, many a moment of pain. But in reading this gloomy part of his narrative, the christian will not find it an unpleasing reflection, that the ordinances of religious worship have a tendency to disturb the conscience which is polluted with guilt.

The fact which led to the full discovery of all Mr. F's crimes was this. In the beginning of July, in the present year, 1790, a man came to him to transfer some stock in the name of Baker. Whoever the man was, he signed the transfer book, and Mr. F. signed his name as a witness. It shortly after appeared that the real Mr. Baker died a day
or

or two previous to the making of this transfer. Mr. F. was then examined before the directors, concerning the part which he took in the transaction. He asserted his own innocence, and declared that he thought it had been Mr. B. himself who transferred the stock. It has been said indeed that Mr. B. was much deformed, and that as Mr. F. had repeatedly transacted business with him before, it was scarcely possible for him to mistake the person. But his own account of the matter is this ; That previous to this transaction, he had not seen Mr. B. more than once in the course of two years ; that the person who came to make the transfer greatly resembled Mr. B. in appearance ; that when the transfer was made he was much hurried in his official business ; that having to provide for the immediate payment of interest to those persons whose property he had embezzled, his mind was in such a state of perturbation as to prevent him from taking that particular notice of the man, whose signature he witnessed, which he ought to have done : and that he
really

really thought at the time that this man was Mr. B. himself. He asserted his innocence in this affair twice on the morning of execution; first in the vestry-room of the chapel, and afterwards in the yard where his irons were knocked off. This last time he said to a friend, who closely but affectionately questioned him on the subject, I have confessed things, of which the directors of the Bank knew nothing; and I can be under no temptation to conceal my guilt in this instance; but I am innocent: I was really deceived in the man. The whole statement of this affair carries with it a degree of conviction, that in this one instance he was not guilty.

Having protested his innocence in the matter it was incumbent on him to endeavour to clear it up. Accordingly on Friday, July 30th, he went down to Sevenoaks in Kent, to try whether he could gain any intelligence of the person, by whom he had been duped. His endeavours were in vain. He could now have no doubt that his offences would be discovered; and therefore he went to Dover, with

with a full determination to throw himself off from one of the cliffs into the sea. When he came to the spot, and was just on the point of perpetrating the horrid deed, it occurred to his mind, What is this distress which I feel, when compared with the torments of hell, into which I am going to plunge myself? This thought struck his mind so forcibly as to prevent him from accomplishing his purpose. He therefore set out the next morning on his return home. He proceeded as far as Shooter's-Hill; but his mind being in extreme torture, and his body quite disordered, he was obliged to stop there some time. However, the same evening, which was Monday, August the 2d, he went towards Deptford. As he was crossing Blackheath, he was robbed of all the little property he had about him, except two Shillings and a few halfpence. About ten o'clock that night he reached the Fountain near Deptford-Bridge. Here he lodged, and was so much indisposed, that he did not quit his bed till the evening of the next day, when he returned to town.

It is probable that the directors of the Bank had some intelligence of his rout, as they had persons in waiting about those houses to which it was most likely he would go. Late on Tuesday evening, August the 3d, just as he had arrived at the door of a relation's house, he was seized. He was taken that night to the Bank solicitor's house. The next day about noon, accompanied by the solicitor, he went to the Bank, and was examined before the court of directors, assisted by a Bow-street magistrate. From the Bank he was taken to the office in Bow-street, where he underwent another examination, and was fully committed to New Prison, Clerkenwell, in order to take his trial, at the next ensuing sessions in the Old Bailey, for forgery.

From the day when he left London, till after his commitment, his mind was in a most dreadful state. He looked upon himself as a being whose sins had hurried him beyond the reach of divine mercy; and was in continual terror, expecting every hour to be plunged into the lowest depths of hell. On Thursday, August 5th, Mrs. Fonton

Fonton and a relation went to see him. Mrs. F. endeavoured to compose his mind, by talking and reading to him; but he was in such a state of distraction, that he could not listen to any thing which she said. He told her, that he knew his portion was with the damned. After Mrs. F's departure, he tried all he could to prevail upon his relation, who had accompanied her to the prison, to procure some poison for him. His relation reasoned much with him on the greatness of the crime of self murder, and when he found he could make no impression, he desired him to stay till the next day, secretly hoping that by then he would be in a better frame. Mr. F. replied, I shall be in hell before that time. What more particular view he at this time had of himself as a sinner does not appear. His mind was full of confusion and horror. He seemed to be fluttering over the awful gulf of perdition, and unable to find any solid ground whereon to rest. He lay down that night in expectation of awaking in endless misery. But

finding himself the next morning still in the land of the living, it gave him a faint glimmering hope. The tears then gushed from his eyes in such abundance, that his pillow was wet through; and he was enabled in a trembling manner to cry to God for mercy. He confessed his guilt to be such as deserved everlasting punishment, and bitterly lamented that he had by his crimes given great occasion to the enemies of religion to blaspheme the name of Christ.

When sinners find a heart to pray, they are sure to find sooner or later, that God has an ear to hear. This was the case with poor Mr. F. When he was brought to see and own his excessive vileness before God, several passages of scripture were brought to his recollection, which gave him encouragement. This passage Isaiah, i. 18, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and this, Micah, vii. 19, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea, were so forcibly impressed upon his mind, that he was lost in a transport of sacred pleasure. Indeed the
mercy

mercy expressed in those words appeared at first so great, that he cried, Surely this cannot be for me! But his confidence was strengthened; and the most lively and fervent gratitude was kindled in his breast, and flowed sweetly from his lips. The next time he saw his family he told them with rapture what a change he experienced in his feelings. He took up the word of God, and found he could then read feelingly, and tell them with fluency of expression, what tender compassion the blessed Saviour had manifested to him and other poor backsliders. He then found much consolation in that promise, Hosea, xiv. 4, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely. On the first Lord's day after his commitment, he spent some time with part of his family, in prayer and reading the scriptures. At this time he was in a heavenly frame of mind. His heart was full, so that he was repeatedly obliged to stop, and his tears ran down in a torrent of penitential joy.

While he was in New Prison, a variety of persons whom he had injured called upon

upon him. At the sight of them he was filled with confusion, and was ready to sink down with shame. But he was enabled to lay his burden at the footstool of sovereign mercy, and to ask for that support which he knew and confessed he did not deserve. While he was thus pleading with his heavenly father, this sentence flowed into his mind, as he said, with peculiar sweetness, Isaiah, xliii. 2, When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. After this scarcely a day passed, in which he did not receive fresh consolation from some portion or other of the sacred writings.

As the day of trial approached, knowing that he was justly charged with the crimes for which he was to be arraigned at the bar, it was his intention to plead guilty. But in this he was over-ruled by some of his friends: and therefore put himself upon

upon his trial. But he was dissatisfied with himself afterwards on this account. Our courts of justice, through a sort of tenderness to the prisoners who come before them, will scarcely suffer a culprit to plead guilty. But Mr. F. was of opinion that the man who is conscious of his guilt, ought to acknowledge that guilt at once. Before his trial came on he was not without hope that he should then enjoy peculiar support from God; and in this hope he was not disappointed. During the time of his trial he felt a secret pleasure in the idea that the Supreme Judge of all the earth had granted him a free pardon. His countenance was remarkably serene. But those who were unacquainted with his frame, mistook that serenity for the sign of an unfeeling heart. Indeed it was not without reason that the billows of popular prejudice beat against him: but infinite mercy had set his feet upon a rock. When he went out of the court after his conviction, some of his fellow prisoners seeing him so chearful, asked him whether he
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was acquitted. He replied, No ; but I shall soon. He meant that when he should appear before God, he should not be condemned.

His confinement after his trial was very different from what it had been before. He was now for the much greater part of the day, shut up in a small dark dungeon. but miserable as was his situation, he found his cell a palace, because he there enjoyed the compassionate smiles of his Redeemer. He said that in that place God had put gladness into his heart, more than in the time when corn, and wine and oil had increased. To his numerous friends who visited him after his condemnation, he generally spoke of himself in terms of the deepest self abasement ; and yet expressed the strongest confidence that in a little time he should experience the full accomplishment of all the divine promises. He used to admire that sovereign grace which had plucked so vile a sinner from the jaws of hell, and had given him a hope full of immortality and glory. He often mentioned one
portion

portion of scripture, from which he seemed to derive perpetual encouragement. It was Isaiah lvii, 17, 18, 19, For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips: peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him.

Enjoying such a frame of mind, he could not hide within his own breast, the mercy which had been shewn him. He longed for his poor brother sufferers to feel what he felt. He used frequently to tell them of the pardoning love of Christ, and of his willingness to save even the most wretched and guilty. Some of them would at times weep, and express their earnest desire to hear and to know more of the compassionate Saviour. And there is reason to believe that Mr. F's conversation with them was not altogether in vain.

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He had for some weeks had a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; and was in some measure anxious to know the time of his departure. At length, on Wednesday evening, November 17th, the report was brought to him, that he was to die on the Wednesday following. When he heard the messengers of death approaching, knowing their business, he felt a momentary shock; but was enabled to receive them as persons bringing good news from a distant country. And from this time to the morning of his death, his eternal prospects seemed to grow every day clearer and brighter; and his conversation was truly edifying to many.

On the Sunday before his death, he went to the chapel, to hear the condemned sermon. And, notwithstanding the disorder which, owing to excessive crowding, prevailed, at the beginning of the service, in the congregation, he was composed, and found it good to be there. On the following day, the hours during which he was permitted to see company, were principally spent

spent in taking leave of many of his friends. Tuesday exhibited an affecting scene. His family and friends wept around him, while he administered relief to their wounded feelings, by reminding them of the happy meeting which he hoped they would enjoy together in heaven. After he had dismissed his other friends, he spent some time in conversation with Mrs. Fonton alone. Then, with humble resignation to God, they took their last farewell of each other; and he retired to his lonely cell to prepare for his approaching fate.

In the night, being benumbed with cold, he lay down about two or three hours, to warm himself: but, excepting a few moments, his mind was, through the whole night, intensely fixed upon divine things. And when the bellman came to remind him, that he was going to die, he received him without any emotions of fear. He rather looked on him as a kind monitor. On Wednesday morning, after he and his fellow sufferers had spent some time by themselves, in singing, he was met in the

chapel by one of his friends, and the minister who had preached the condemned sermon. They enquired into the state of his mind. He informed them that nature felt a shock at parting with friends, and going out of the world in such a manner. But, said he, nature will shrink from dissolution, in any form. I thank God, that my hope is unshaken. As a poor guilty creature, I rely on Jesus Christ, for pardon and strength: and blessed be his name, I find that he does support me. When the service of the chapel was finished, a solemn composure was apparent in his countenance and conversation.

At about a quarter past eight o'clock, he made his appearance on the scaffold, and was followed by Mr. Tyler, another convict. Three coiners, who suffered with them, were then brought to the scaffold, on a sledge. When the dreadful solemnity of fixing the halts was ended, they all engaged in prayer and singing; and were assisted in this exercise by the Rev. Messrs. Villette & Love, and by one of Mr. F's friends,

friends. During the whole time, Mr. F's mind seemed to be remarkably abstracted from all external objects, and to centre in that gracious Being, who alone could support him in that trying situation. At a little after nine, prayer being finished, he said, that the Lord Jesus was then his only dependance, and that he found him to be his support. The ministers who had assisted on this melancholy occasion, then retired from the scaffold; and in a few moments the convicts were launched into eternity.

Thus died a man, whose offences have provoked much deserved censure, and whose repentance has excited much generous compassion. The impressions which the perusal of these memoirs will make upon the minds of the readers, will be as various, no doubt, as their different prepossessions and views. Mr. F's, it must be granted, was an extraordinary case. It therefore became the narrator simply to state facts as they occurred; and to leave every one at liberty to make his own remarks. Let it suffice here

here to say, that Mr. F. was visited by a number of respectable ministers, and other persons, of different sentiments and denominations: And whatever views they might before have had, of what ought to be the feelings of a man in such a situation, they were then persuaded that his repentance was real, and his comforts well grounded. And they could not but unite in saying, This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.



F I N I S.

The following Verses (from Dr. WATTS's
51st Psalm) were sung in the Chapel on
the Morning of Execution.

O thou that hear'st when sinners cry,
Tho' all my crimes before thee lie;
Behold them not with angry look,
But blot their mem'ry from thy book.

Create my nature pure within,
And form my soul averse to sin:
Let thy good spirit ne'er depart,
Nor hide thy presence from my heart.

I cannot live without thy light,
Cast out and banish'd from thy sight:
Thy holy joys, my God restore,
And guard me that I fall no more.

Tho' I have griev'd thy spirit, Lord,
His help and comfort still afford:
And let a wretch come near thy throne,
To plead the merits of thy Son.

A broken heart, my God, my King,
Is all the sacrifice I bring:
The God of grace will ne'er despise
A broken heart for sacrifice.

My soul lies humbled in the dust,
And owns thy dreadful sentence just
Look down, O Lord, with pitying eye,
And save the soul condemn'd to die.

The following Vols (from Dr. Watts's
4th Edition) were lying in the Chapel on
the Morning of 25th October 1791

Vol. 1. of the new edition of the
1st Part of my former edition of the
Hymns for the Church of England
that had been ordered from the press

Vol. 2. of the new edition of the
2d Part of my former edition of the
Hymns for the Church of England
that had been ordered from the press

Vol. 3. of the new edition of the
3d Part of my former edition of the
Hymns for the Church of England
that had been ordered from the press



Vol. 4. of the new edition of the
4th Part of my former edition of the
Hymns for the Church of England
that had been ordered from the press

Vol. 5. of the new edition of the
5th Part of my former edition of the
Hymns for the Church of England
that had been ordered from the press

Vol. 6. of the new edition of the
6th Part of my former edition of the
Hymns for the Church of England
that had been ordered from the press

